

TWG 11: Cross-cultural alignments, fertilization, differentiation: bridging the gaps through technology

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Introduction

In the digital era where globalization and migration are part of education, it is difficult to define cultures and determine how much it is related to nationality, religion or identity. Culture includes traditions, heritage, language, religion, ancestry, aesthetics, thinking patterns, and social structures. Digital technologies represent a two-edged sword that may either contribute to the destruction or the revitalization of cultures. The effects of media and related technologies have contributed to the loss of culture and languages. This trend underscores the importance of language awareness across the globe. Although the Internet has contributed to globalization and the homogenization of culture, it also provides new opportunities for the revitalization of culture and for fostering cross-cultural understanding. In recent years, the use of online projects providing opportunities for collaborative learning in a multi-cultural environment, even between hostile cultures, has been increasing. Information and communication technologies (ICT) serve as a significant lever for learning, with affordances for various teaching and learning approaches. The digital environment enables the formation of heterogeneous groups that were not possible in the past due to physical limitations. Such an environment creates learning opportunities with students from different cultures and countries to interact and learn together. It allows for the formation of relationships without the influence of stereotypes that may arise from external appearances and can even contribute more successfully to cross-cultural understanding than a face-to-face intercultural meeting. Examples of projects that use ICT to connect cultures: *TEC (Technology, Education and Cultural diversity)*; *The Dissolving Boundaries Program*; *NASA's STEM Innovation Lab*; *The Four Directions Project*; *Research Project – Culturally responsive use of ICT to support indigenous students' learning*; *Africa Digital Schools [BADILIKO] project*; *The LOCH project*; *The Micool (Mobile Intercultural Cooperative Learning) Project*.

Issues

- Characteristics of learners and educators
- Individual, social and cultural differences between learners
- Language differences
- Awareness of cultural diversity of learners
- Different values of learning in different societies

Identified Current Misalignments:

- Professional development and awareness of cultural diversity of learners
- External human resources to help teachers in class
- Curriculum designed for majority population, not for minorities
- Digital disruption
- Top down decisions
- Cultural barriers (religion, ethics, language)
- Digital divides (access; competence/skills)
- Digital culture (influenced by American/ majority culture)
- Lack of social justice orientation
- Social/political structures that limit access and information.

‘Emerging’ New Alignments:

- Universal design to cater diverse students
- New technologies addressing differences
- International standards (UNESCO, OECD, ISTE etc.)
- International projects (GLOBE, TEC, International Space Weather Initiative etc.)

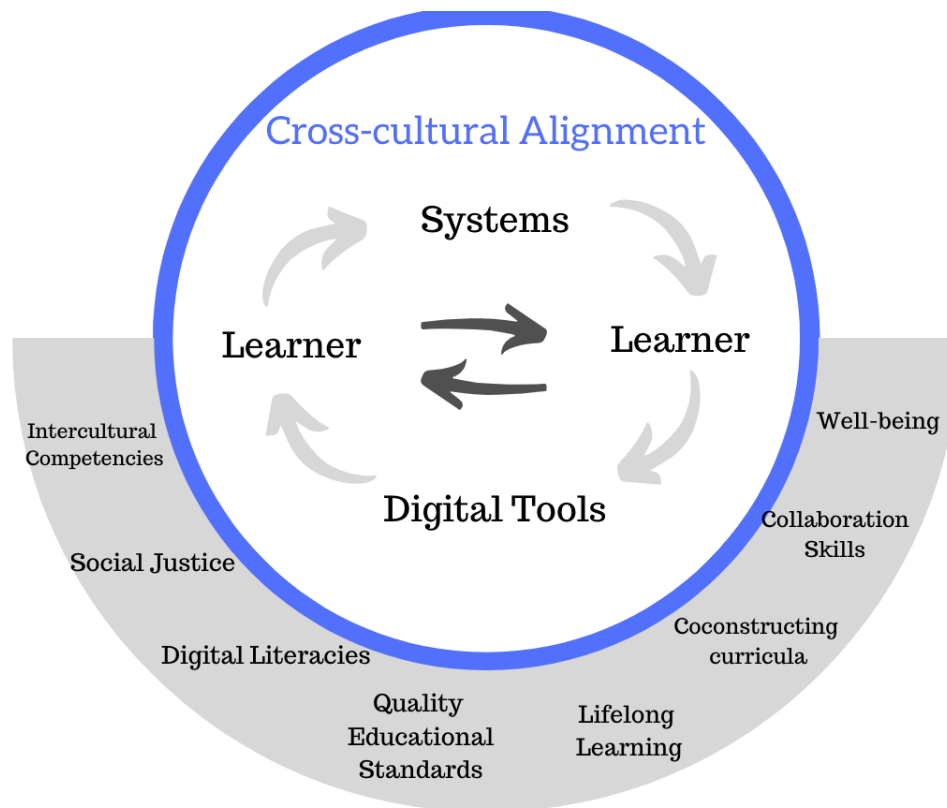


Figure 1. Cross Cultural Alignment (CCA) Model for learning in the digital age

Strategies and Actions for achieving cross cultural alignment:

- Ensure the basic foundations: social justice; lifelong learning; well-being; quality educational standards
- Take care to provide learner with intercultural competencies, collaboration skills, digital literacy
- Provide international infrastructures for cross-cultural learning, including funds, ongoing support, pedagogy informed by research
- Form a sustained international committee for international education that will include policymakers, practitioners, researchers from diverse cultural backgrounds
- Support teachers to work online with a diverse student population.
- Co-construct the curriculum by all the partners (learners, policymakers, practitioners, researchers)

Policymakers and practitioners should follow the CCA model, and researchers should examine the model and validate it by empirical studies.